

ASK THE TIC

FOOD AND BEVERAGE EXPORTS

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Trade Information Center

Exporting food and beverages from the United States can be more complicated than exporting other products due to requirements imposed by governments internationally. Several U.S. government agencies issue certificates and other documentation that is often necessary for exporting food and beverages. These agencies provide U.S. companies with assistance in filling out the appropriate paperwork as well as determining the shipping requirements for specific products and destinations.



WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ON CERTIFICATES AND/OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION NECESSARY WHEN EXPORTING FOOD OR BEVERAGE PRODUCTS?

Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA issues certificates that are often required by other countries for importing food and beverages into their markets. A “certificate of free sale” is issued for exported products that are legally sold or distributed in the United States. Some governments use this certificate as proof of a product’s quality. A “certificate of exportability” is needed for companies that export products that are not sold in the United States but that are otherwise acceptable as exports. For example, a product that does not meet U.S. domestic standards may surpass levels set by another government.

To learn more about these export certificates, look up the article, “FDA Export Certificates for U.S. Products,” located on the TIC Web site, www.export.gov/tic, under “Answers to Your Export Questions.” For more information on FDA guidelines, rules, and regulations, visit www.cfsan.fda.gov/~lrd/imports.html, or www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qa-indq.html.

Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS). The FSIS is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that regulates and inspects meat, egg products, and poultry. The FSIS issues export certificates that are required for certain types of food. These certificates are called “meat and poultry export certificates of wholesomeness.” There is no time limit on the validity of a

certificate once it has been issued. However, all certificates have an “edition date,” which means that it is possible that the certificate could be rejected if the edition date is obsolete.

In order to be exported, meat, poultry, and egg products must be inspected and passed by the FSIS. Foreign countries may have additional requirements, which the exporter is responsible for fulfilling. In order to get an export certificate, an export application must be submitted to the FSIS inspector at the federally inspected establishment where the product is located. If the application is satisfactory and the shipment meets the requirements of the receiving country, the FSIS inspector will issue an export certificate. An FSIS inspector or veterinarian, depending on the requirements of the foreign country, must sign the certificate. In addition, some countries require individual producing plants to be approved as eligible to export to them, and they may also restrict the entry of certain types of meat and poultry products from the United States.

Further details on meat and poultry certificates, export applications, the requirements of countries, and lists of approved establishments may be found on the FSIS Web site: www.fsis.usda.gov/OFO/export/explib.html.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The AMS is an agency of the USDA and is responsible for grading, certification, and standardization of food products. In addition, the AMS is responsible for marketing and overseeing the regulatory programs of the USDA. The agency issues certificates pertaining to grading, size, and other foreign buyer or government specifications. Information on AMS food programs is available on its Web site: www.ams.usda.gov.

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). The ATF is an arm of the U.S. Department of the Treasury that regulates alcoholic beverages and wine. In order to export wine, beer, and distilled spirits at the wholesale level, a “wholesaler’s basic permit” is required and issued from the ATF prior to exportation. A background check is also required when a wholesaler’s basic permit is issued. If alcohol is sold at the retail level abroad, no permit is required by the United States. Other countries may mandate specific documentation. Specialists at the ATF can help companies navigate the application process. ATF regulations can be found at www.atf.treas.gov. Find Title 27, Part 252, and the link labeled “Exportation of Liquors.” This site explains package stamping, export marks, and other requirements in exporting alcohol.

In addition to the aforementioned goods, many agricultural exports need some form of certification. Details on inspection certificates can be found on the TIC Web site, www.export.gov/tic, under "Answers to Your Export Questions." The document entitled "Inspection Certificates for U.S. Export Products" lists a multitude of products that may require certification or inspection by either the U.S. government or foreign governments.



WHAT OTHER FOOD AND BEVERAGE EXPORT ASSISTANCE DOES THE UNITED STATES PROVIDE?

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA handles meats, fruits, grains, and other agricultural products. Most food-related assistance is handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), which operates programs designed to improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace. The FAS assists food exporters by providing a number of services, including trade leads, market reports, and export data. The FAS also organizes and sponsors trade shows and missions worldwide. The trade leads are foreign trade inquiries that FAS offices overseas transmit to the USDA and update daily on its Web site. In addition, the FAS introduces U.S. companies' agricultural products to 20,000 potential buyers in 65 countries through the distribution of its biweekly newsletter, *Buyer Alert*. The FAS also maintains foreign buyer lists containing contact information of more than 23,000 importers of food, farm, forest, and seafood products in 85 countries. The FAS also has a detailed database of U.S. suppliers.

Information on FAS services can be found on the FAS Web site: www.fas.usda.gov. FAS attachés at U.S. embassies can provide information on documentation and licensing requirements needed for destination markets. A directory of these attachés, as well as specific country information, can be found at www.fas.usda.gov/fasposts.html.

U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC). The Office of Consumer Goods at the DOC has industry analysts who specialize in processed foods, beverages, and snack foods. The Office of Consumer Goods provides U.S. processed food export statistics, industry news, special reports, tariff rates on food items, and information on the new NAICS food classification code system that replaced the SIC food classification code. For more information on the Office of Consumer Goods, visit www.export.gov/ocg.

Trade Information Center at the DOC. Tariff rates on food exports, other general market information, and referrals to other government export assistance programs can be obtained by calling (800) USA-TRAD(E).



WHAT OTHER RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EXPORTING FOOD AND BEVERAGES?

Associations that represent the food and beverage industry are also resources for more information on exporting these goods.

Associations for Food and Beverages

The FAS works with industry and trade associations to promote U.S. products abroad and also maintains a list of various associations and groups on its Web site. To access this information, visit the "AgExporter Assistance" page at www.fas.usda.gov/agexport/exporter.html.

Another listing of associations can be found on the Web site of the DOC's Office of Consumer Goods: www.export.gov/ocg. On that site, select the "Food and Beverages" industry link in the left-hand column, and then find the associations listed under "Industry News."

Associations for Alcohol

The Beer Institute: www.beerinst.org

Distilled Spirits Council of the United States: www.discus.org

National Beer Wholesale Association: www.nbwa.org

The Wine Institute: www.wineinstitute.org

International Organizations

Codex Alimentarius: www.codexalimentarius.net

Food and Agricultural Organization: www.fao.org

Ministries of health, agriculture, and fisheries and related agencies: www.fda.gov/oia/agencies.htm

World Health Organization, Food Safety Program: www.who.int/fsf

Other Information

For information about humanitarian shipments, see the "Ask the TIC" article in the August 2002 issue of *Export America*. The on-line version of the article is located at <http://exportamerica.doc.gov> as well as www.export.gov/tic (under "Answers to Your Export Questions"). ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Trade Information Center (TIC) is operated by the International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce for the 19 federal agencies comprising the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee. These agencies are responsible for managing the U.S. government's export promotion programs and activities. You, too, can "Ask the TIC" by calling (800) USA-TRAD(E) toll free, Monday through Friday, 8:30-5:30 EST. Or visit the TIC's Web site at www.export.gov/tic.